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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN INAUGURATES OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP

Classified By: CDA Carol Fuller for Reasons 1.5(B) and (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: At its inaugural Permanent Council meeting January 14, the Kazakhstani Chairmanship reiterated its call for an OSCE summit - stressing the importance of building on ongoing discussions of European security - and highlighted its priorities for the year. Kazakhstan urged efforts to address terrorism and other threats; resolve the protracted conflicts; strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan; expand work on transportation and environmental issues; and promote tolerance and non-discrimination. While Russia and some participating States backed the proposed summit, others were more cautious; the United States, the EU, Norway, Switzerland, and Canada emphasized that a summit must be based on substance. Most participating States expressed general support for Kazakhstan's priorities, but clear differences emerged on the extent to which the OSCE should focus on the political-military versus the human dimensions of security. The number of positive interventions, including from Central Asian countries, on OSCE involvement in Afghanistan, and a less negative attitude by Russia may bode well for renewed efforts there. End summary.

KAZAKHSTAN CALLS FOR A SUMMIT...

12. (SBU) In a video address to the Permanent Council January 14, Kazakhstani President Nazarbayev highlighted the OSCE's role in ensuring international security but argued that the organization's effectiveness must be improved, particularly given the need to address emerging challenges. Nazarbayev argued that a summit - possibly focusing on "topical security issues," Afghanistan, or tolerance - not only would provide a "powerful impetus" to efforts to adapt the OSCE to new threats, but also would boost the organization's stature. While affirming Kazakhstan's commitment to the fundamental principles and values of the OSCE and promising to pursue further domestic "political liberalization," Nazarbayev highlighted the need for "optimum balance" among the OSCE's political-military, economic, and human dimensions (suggesting to some that Kazakhstan potentially could back Russia's push for emphasis on hard security matters over human rights and fundamental freedoms).

13. (SBU) Building on Nazarbayev's address, Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Saudabayev emphasized that preparing for and holding a summit was "a most important task" and urged participating States to begin the process of reaching agreement on a substantive agenda and acceptable timeframe.

Saudabayev added that Kazakhstan intended to host an informal ministerial in Almaty this summer and asked for an "understanding and enthusiastic approach" to the proposal.

...AND OUTLINES ITS PRIORITIES

14. (SBU) Outlining Kazakhstan's priorities in the political-military dimension, Saudabayev stated Kazakhstan's intent to continue the Corfu Process, to include discussions of Russia's proposed European security treaty. He added that the Vienna Document 1999 (VD99) should be strengthened; urged progress on the entry into force of A/CFE; mentioned a desire to make the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) more productive; urged greater non-proliferation efforts; and vowed to do more to fight terrorism and illicit drugs trafficking. He also said Kazakhstan intended to pay particular attention to the protracted conflicts and Afghanistan, noting that Kazakhstan would urge projects to strengthen Afghanistan's borders with Central Asian states, improve cross-border cooperation, and enhance law enforcement activities.

15. (SBU) Turning to other issues, Saudabayev said transportation, migration, and energy security would be Kazakhstan's main concerns in the economic and environmental dimension. He added that tolerance and intercultural dialogue would be Kazakhstan's top human dimension priorities and urged participating States to support the June 29-30 high-level conference on tolerance. Saudabayev went on to

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highlight the importance of rule of law, election monitoring, and other issues and said Kazakhstan would continue to support the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

PARTICIPATING STATES RESPOND

16. (SBU) While Russia and some participating States (Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Armenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan) backed Kazakhstan's proposed summit, arguing that it could prove "vitally important" after a decade of "marking time" and adding that it might boost the OSCE's credibility, others were more cautious. The United States, the EU, Norway, Switzerland, and Canada emphasized that a summit must be based on substance and stressed that concrete progress in ongoing Corfu Process discussions on European security must precede such a meeting. Speaking for the EU, the Spanish ambassador added that the presentation by the end of June of an interim report on the Corfu Process would be an important benchmark. Reacting to positive comments on the summit, the German ambassador whispered to the Charge that the summit is not a "done deal" and that Berlin does not view this push positively right now.

17. (SBU) Kazakhstan's stated priorities won statements of general support from most participating States, but clear differences emerged on the extent to which the OSCE should focus on the political-military versus the human dimensions of security. Russia (supported by Belarus) reiterated its desire for "better balance" among the OSCE's three dimensions and urged greater emphasis on security matters, such as efforts to update VD99 or extend the length of the ASRC. Russia also argued that the focus in the human dimension should shift to freedom of movement issues and visa regimes issues and proposed a seminar for consular personnel aimed at "loosening or lifting" visa requirements. The United States, the EU, Norway, Switzerland, and Canada, in contrast, reiterated the continued importance of the human dimension and urged continued focus on democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

18. (SBU) On Afghanistan, participating States generally were supportive of expanded OSCE engagement, in line with the decision taken at the 2007 Ministerial in Madrid. Russia stopped short of addressing efforts to introduce OSCE activities inside Afghanistan, but said it was prepared to make "specific contributions" to further the OSCE's work with Afghanistan, including continuing counter-narcotics training at its Domodedovo facility. and was willing to "consider other proposals." Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan expressed support for technical assistance to Afghanistan and welcomed the OSCE's focus on border management and security, with Kyrgyzstan noting that it would like to "ward off threats" emanating from Afghanistan and urging participating States to reconsider the so-called Bishkek Initiative. The remaining Central Asian pS-Uzbekistan--which opposes OSCE involvement in Afghanistan like Russia, did not intervene at all. In a brief intervention, the Afghan ambassador reiterated his country's appreciation for OSCE assistance.welcomed calls for greater OSCE engagement and expressed hope the issue would remain high on the OSCE agenda.

COMMENT

19. (C) So far, Kazakhstan is saying all the right things, but we will need to coordinate closely with key delegations to ensure that core human rights and fundamental freedoms receive continued emphasis. Mission perceptions, shared by the EU and like-minded countries, is that we may need to be united, consistent, and very vocal on issues of importance to us, if they do not mesh with the Kazakh agenda. A summit - preceded by an informal ministerial in Almaty - clearly remains Kazakhstan's highest priority, and the Chairmanship likely will urge participating States to support the proposal at every opportunity. We will have to work with key

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delegations to ensure a coordinated approach, while at the same time identifying the deliverables we might want in exchange for any agreement on a summit. We also will have to coordinate closely with key delegations to ensure that core human rights and fundamental freedoms receive continued emphasis.
FULLER